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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

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FARMERS' BULLETIN 340.

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DECLARATION OF GOVERNORS FOR  
CONSERVATION OF NATURAL  
RESOURCES.



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1908.

## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
FOREST SERVICE,  
*Washington, D. C., October 28, 1908.*

SIR: Believing that the Declaration of Governors adopted at the recent conference on conservation of our natural resources is worthy of the widest circulation among the people, and that it will do more than anything else that could be published to arouse a popular interest in this very important subject, I respectfully recommend its issuance as a Farmers' Bulletin.

Respectfully,

GIFFORD PINCHOF,  
*Forester.*

HON. JAMES WILSON,  
*Secretary of Agriculture.*

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# DECLARATION OF GOVERNORS FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

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## INTRODUCTION.

The Declaration of Governors contained in this bulletin was adopted by the conference of governors of the States and Territories called by the President to consider the conservation of our natural resources, and which met at the White House May 13, 14, and 15, 1908. Besides the governors there were invited to the conference the members of the Cabinet, the justices of the Supreme Court, the members of both Houses of Congress, representatives of the great national organizations, the Inland Waterways Commission, and, as special guests, Hon. William Jennings Bryan, Mr. James J. Hill, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, and Mr. John Mitchell. The late ex-President Grover Cleveland was also invited as a special guest, but illness prevented him from attending. At the request of the President each governor brought with him to the conference three citizens from his State or Territory to act as assistants or advisers.

The object of the conference was stated by the President in his letter of invitation to the governors, in which he said:

It seems to me time for the country to take account of its natural resources, and to inquire how long they are likely to last. We are prosperous now; we should not forget that it will be just as important to our descendants to be prosperous in their time.

Papers which discussed the present state of our various natural resources were read by experts and specialists in each respective line, and these were followed by an open discussion among the governors of the points brought out.

The conference then appointed a committee to draft a declaration, consisting of the following: Governor NEWTON C. BLANCHARD, of Louisiana; Governor JOHN FRANKLIN FORT, of New Jersey; Governor J. O. DAVIDSON, of Wisconsin; Governor JOHN C. CUTLER, of Utah; and Governor MARTIN F. ANSEL, of South Carolina.

This committee prepared and submitted the declaration which follows, and it was unanimously adopted by the conference of governors as embodying their conclusions on the question of conservation.

## DECLARATION.

We, the governors of the States and Territories of the United States of America, in conference assembled, do hereby declare the conviction that the great prosperity of our country rests upon the abundant resources of the land chosen by our forefathers for their homes, and where they laid the foundation of this great nation.

We look upon these resources as a heritage to be made use of in establishing and promoting the comfort, prosperity, and happiness of the American people, but not to be wasted, deteriorated, or needlessly destroyed.

We agree that our country's future is involved in this; that the great natural resources supply the material basis upon which our civilization must continue to depend, and upon which the perpetuity of the nation itself rests.

We agree, in the light of the facts brought to our knowledge and from information received from sources which we can not doubt, that this material basis is threatened with exhaustion. Even as each succeeding generation from the birth of the nation has performed its part in promoting the progress and development of the Republic, so do we in this generation recognize it as a high duty to perform our part; and this duty in large degree lies in the adoption of measures for the conservation of the natural wealth of the country.

We declare our firm conviction that this conservation of our natural resources is a subject of transcendent importance, which should engage unremittingly the attention of the nation, the States, and the people in earnest cooperation. These natural resources include the land on which we live and which yields our food; the living waters which fertilize the soil, supply power, and form great avenues of commerce; the forests which yield the materials for our homes, prevent erosion of the soil, and conserve the navigation and other uses of the streams; and the minerals which form the basis of our industrial life, and supply us with heat, light, and power.

We agree that the land should be so used that erosion and soil wash shall cease; and that there should be reclamation of arid and semiarid regions by means of irrigation, and of swamp and overflowed regions by means of drainage; that the waters should be so conserved and used as to promote navigation, to enable the arid regions to be reclaimed by irrigation, and to develop power in the interests of the people; that the forests which regulate our rivers, support our industries, and promote the fertility and productiveness of the soil should be preserved and perpetuated; that the minerals found so abundantly beneath the surface should be so used as to prolong their utility; that the beauty, healthfulness, and habitability of our country should be preserved and increased; that sources of national wealth exist for the benefit of the people, and that monopoly thereof should not be tolerated.

We commend the wise forethought of the President in sounding the note of warning as to the waste and exhaustion of the natural resources of the country, and signify our high appreciation of his action in calling this conference to consider the same and to seek remedies therefor through cooperation of the Nation and the States.

We agree that this cooperation should find expression in suitable action by the Congress within the limits of and coextensive with the national jurisdiction of the subject, and, complementary thereto, by the legislatures of the several States within the limits of and coextensive with their jurisdiction.

We declare the conviction that in the use of the national resources our independent States are interdependent and bound together by ties of mutual benefits, responsibilities, and duties.

We agree in the wisdom of future conferences between the President, Members of Congress, and the governors of States on the conservation of our natural resources with a view of continued cooperation and action on the lines suggested; and to this end we advise that from time to time, as in his judgment may seem wise, the President call the governors of States and Members of Congress and others into conference.

We agree that further action is advisable to ascertain the present condition of our natural resources and to promote the conservation of the same; and to that end we recommend the appointment by each State of a commission on the conservation of natural resources, to cooperate with each other and with any similar commission of the Federal Government.

We urge the continuation and extension of forest policies adapted to secure the husbanding and renewal of our diminishing timber supply, the prevention of soil erosion, the protection of headwaters, and the maintenance of the purity and navigability of our streams. We recognize that the private ownership of forest lands entails responsibilities in the interests of all the people, and we favor the enactment of laws looking to the protection and replacement of privately owned forests.

We recognize in our waters a most valuable asset of the people of the United States, and we recommend the enactment of laws looking to the conservation of water resources for irrigation, water supply, power, and navigation, to the end that navigable and source streams may be brought under complete control and fully utilized for every purpose. We especially urge on the Federal Congress the immediate adoption of a wise, active, and thorough waterway policy, providing for the prompt improvement of our streams and the conservation of their watersheds required for the uses of commerce and the protection of the interests of our people.

We recommend the enactment of laws looking to the prevention of waste in the mining and extraction of coal, oil, gas, and other minerals with a view to their wise conservation for the use of the people, and to the protection of human life in the mines.

Let us conserve the foundations of our prosperity.